

**Working in the Time of COVID-19 Oral History Project**  
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**Jane Hopkins**  
**Registered Nurse**  
**Executive Vice President,**  
**Service Employees International Union, Healthcare 1199 Northwest**

**Narrator:** Jane Hopkins

**Interviewer:** Wendi Zhou

**Subjects:** Pandemic, racial justice, labor movement, hospital, healthcare industry, labor union, SEIU 1199NW, union members, masks, personal protective equipment, racial justice, employers, vaccination, home healthcare workers, healthcare workers, workers of color, vaccine hesitancy

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WENDI ZHOU 00:00:16

Hello, Jane, and thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. This is Wendi Zhou interviewing Jane Hopkins on Tuesday, December 28, 2021 for the Working in the Time of COVID-19 Oral History Project. This is a remote interview, and I am in Miami, Florida, and Jane is in Snohomish, Washington. So Jane, can you tell me your full name? And please spell out your first and last name?

JANE HOPKINS 00:00:51

Jane Hopkins. My first name is spelled J-A-N-E. My last name is H-O-P-K-I-N-S.

WENDI 00:01:01

And how old are you?

JANE 00:01:04

52.

WENDI 00:01:07

What is your birth date? And where were you born?

JANE 00:01:13

December 4, 1969. And I was born in Sierra Leone.

WENDI 00:01:19

What gender if any, do you identify as and what are your pronouns?

JANE 00:01:25

I'm a female. And she/her.

WENDI 00:01:30

What race or ethnicity do you identify as and how important is your racial ethnic background to you?

JANE 00:01:38

I am Black. And it's very important to me because I am a woman of color. And that's who I am. So I can't—you know—That's just who I am.

WENDI 00:01:56

Can you talk about what social, political, ethnic, racial or religious communities you regularly connect with or participate in?

JANE 00:02:06

I work a lot in the labor movement, as well. And I spend a lot of time with my African family.

WENDI 00:02:16

Where do you live now?

JANE 00:02:19

Snohomish, Washington.

WENDI 00:02:21

Now we'll move on to questions about occupational information. So what is your occupation or profession?

JANE 00:02:33

Could you repeat that again? Sorry.

WENDI 00:02:35

What is your occupation or profession?

JANE 00:02:41

The Executive Vice President of SEIU [Service Employees International Union] Healthcare 1199 Northwest. I am also a registered nurse.

WENDI 00:02:49

How long have you been employed as a registered nurse? And how long have you been employed in SEIU 1199 Northwest?

JANE 00:03:00

I have been a nurse for 21 years, and I have been employed at SEIU 1199 since 2000.

WENDI 00:03:13

How long have you been a member of SEIU 1199 Northwest?

JANE 00:03:21

Since 2000. 21 years.

WENDI 00:03:28

So can you run me through a typical day in your life before the pandemic from the time you woke up to the time you went to bed?

JANE 00:03:40

Well, I spent a lot of time in meetings, but I spent a lot of time really working on what our members need, as we are a union and really working with different members of the union to make life better for our members, whether it is to address grievances, whether it's really meeting with members that work directly with organizers that work directly with members to make sure that they have what they need every day. So it's really what I do all day, every day.

WENDI 00:04:28

And how has your work been impacted or disrupted by the pandemic?

JANE 00:04:34

I would say it's not been disrupted, what it's done is just—I'm just doing more and during the pandemic, our members need more research, more resources, more information, what is needed for them so that they can safely look after patients every day. So I would say the work is just multiplied since the pandemic, especially at the beginning, when COVID started, because our members didn't know what was going to happen to them, did not know what was going to happen to their jobs, did not know what's going to happen to how to care for patients, did not know if they're going to have the equipment they needed to be able to give good care. And how they're going to look after people knowing that they might get COVID and have to take that home to their families every day. So it was a very stressful time for members and, as a union, needed to be there to help them navigate through this horrible time that they've had to go through in the two years.

WENDI 00:05:44

Would you mind elaborating a bit more on the specific resources or needs of the union members, which has been really influenced by the toll the pandemic has taken on health care workers?

JANE 00:06:05

It has, at the beginning of the pandemic, there was the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] was the body that really told healthcare workers the standards that needed to happen, and it was really difficult at the beginning of the pandemic, when all of a sudden we knew as a union, we knew that our members knew that this virus was airborne. And there was a lot of—We're being told by employers, we're being told by government entities, we're being told by the CDC that it was droplets. And if that was the case, the way that was needed for us, for the members, for our members was different. It was a droplet, there was a different treatment, if there was aerosol, there was different treatment. We continued to fight them, push and tell everyone that we believe that this was aerosol, and that our members needed to wear masks, and that was the highest standard, that it didn't matter, that even if it was droplets, like they said, even though we believed and knew that it was aerosol, that we always needed to give the best protection to every worker. And that meant that every worker needed to have [an n95 mask]. So there was literally this hierarchical environment, in hospitals, and in healthcare fields where people that made the most got the best protection and people that made the least got the least protection. Our union represents [healthcare workers] wall-to-wall in a hospital, whether you're a nurse, a nurse practitioner, or you are a housekeeper that's cleaning the rooms, all these jobs were important, and everybody needed to be protected the same. And we were pushing very hard that everyone that worked in a hospital needed to get n95. That was the biggest piece of work that we did at the beginning. And also what happened if our members got COVID? Are they going to be protected? Are they going to be given time off so that they can actually stay home and they're going to, or one employer is going to force them to come in when we knew that they were going to, when we knew that they were going to have to stay home? Is the employer going to pay for them to stay home, or they have to use all through the benefit time for them to stay home. So when there is a catastrophe in their family's life, they could not take time off. Because they've used it all on this pandemic. So we worked a lot on that. We worked with government entities to see if we can get hotels, for people that are really worried about taking this illness home. Can we get hotel rooms for healthcare workers, so that they can go home? They can stay the night, they don't have to worry about taking their families home while working on transportation, making sure that they get free transportation, making sure that they have free parking. We thought we worked on making sure that everybody knew the information that we had like, immediately, right didn't wait. You know, it was like live yielding information about all the things that we knew about the pandemic, all the resources that we had, all

the places that people can go for help when they needed a pandemic, you know, when they needed help. We knew that staffing was going to be an issue. So we have been fighting and working really hard to make sure that hospitals are going to be well staffed. So there are a lot of things that we need to do even after two years to make sure that workers are safe, that workers are being heard in this pandemic so that they can have what they need. We worked a lot in the past few months, we'll be working on mental health. Our members are traumatized. They've got PTSD, watching people die every day. And what are we doing? What are employers doing? What is the government doing to help them feel so that they can deal so that they can deal with the trauma that this pandemic is causing to their mental health? That's a lot.

WENDI 00:10:44

If you're comfortable sharing more, are there any specific actions that you or your union took to address the issue of mental health?

JANE 00:10:58

We had a couple of town halls where we talked about where we had experts come in, and tried and worked with—, tell people what they needed to do. We also have worked with our members to work with employers to make it easier for people to have access to counseling. It's still a problem, still an issue. And also, we really wanted to make sure that employers gave people rest days so that they can take vacation days, and that has still been— That's been a biggest problem: because of short staffing people have never been able to take time off. So although we've done some work, there's still so much more to do to help with the mental health of our healthcare workers, and all they've done and how we can make sure that they can survive this pandemic and continue to stay in the healthcare field after this is over.

WENDI 00:12:00

Earlier, you also mentioned that your employer did not provide n95 masks at first. So I would like to know more about how you and your union organized to work toward healthier workers having n95 masks for even the lowest paid workers.

JANE 00:12:28

We took several avenues because we knew that it was going to take a lot for the public to be aware, and to get our members the right masks that they needed. So we went to the legislature, we talked to the governor, we talked to all these political people. We had Joint Labor Management [Committee meetings] with employers and asked for n95s. We then had to take actions as workers. So there were a lot of times where, right at the beginning, we're doing massive actions when workers will do actions outside the workplace where they say, "I need my n95s."

So we did all that. And also, we were able to get mask donations from the public. But mainly, it was really the workers standing together as a union making this huge cry, that, you want us to look up to you? We need to be safe, and we need to make sure that we have the right masks."

So the workers were out there outside of the facility saying "we need masks."

And the public had to hear. I know that there wasn't enough and they had to really work very hard to increase the production for masks, but if our members hadn't stood up as unions, and we didn't have the avenues that we had, more healthcare workers would have died from this virus.

Another thing that I was really proud of for this work is the fact that racial justice was so important that we could see that this pandemic had really shown that people of color, especially people of color that had low paying jobs, were the ones that got the resources last. And we were able, as a union, to really bring to the surface and let people see how racism are showing up even at this time of the pandemic and where they would say, "The housekeeper who goes in a room to clean the room does not know need an n95, but a nurse does."

Right? And that all the information on this virus was only done in English, and it was not done in different languages in the hospital. That was not the right thing to do. And our members really fought very, very hard to really raise the issue of racism and how we can reduce that by really asking the employees to really remember the people that are not being seen,

right? To make sure that information has been translated so that everyone understands the risks for this illness, and what people need to do to protect themselves.

WENDI 00:15:44

Can you elaborate more on how your union took action to address issues of racial justice or language justice in the context of the pandemic?

JANE 00:15:55

We needed to be everywhere, right? We did everything that we did as a union, including our members, because our members, this has been for SEIU 1199. And a huge issue was about really working to make every member understand that affects the intellect, that racial justice is the only way that we're going to have the best to be able to give the best care to everyone. And the way that we could have better unions, right? And so every conversation we had, we were really looking at it through that lens, right? Whether we're talking about PPE, whether we're talking about time off, whether we're talking about childcare, whether we're talking about information, what are we doing to make sure that we are looking at everything through that lens. And I think because we're able to do that, you see that the conversations are really hard, whether it's about people getting vaccinated, whether it was about getting masks, it was really who was what are we not looking at? What lens are we looking at and what lens—What is that default lens? And how can we make sure that we're not looking through that default lens, that we're looking through this racial justice lens, equity lens, so that everybody can have what they need?

WENDI 00:17:13

A wave of protests for the Black Lives Matter Movement emerged during the spring of 2020. And it really serves to highlight the racial disparities and people's experience of COVID-19. So what are your thoughts and observations regarding this movement?

JANE 00:17:36

I think the Black Lives Matter Movement has been around for a long time. I'm really glad that, you know, it's now a slogan that everybody uses. But you know, I think then it became a thing that even corporations that are saying we believe in Black Lives Matter, really. But the policies have not changed, right? So I think, yes, it's good that we're talking about Black Lives Matter. But the only time that black lives are *really* going to matter is when we see changes in policy, when we see every policy that people are looking at and making sure that we are looking through the lens of black lives. I always say to people—because being a black woman having to experience racism, and even being a leader now in the union, knowing that our union itself is built on institutional racism. How can we dismantle that, that every institution has to dismantle that racism, and every institution needs to dismantle white supremacy. Every. It's all built on that. Even the little things that we do, the everyday decisions that we make, are influenced by white supremacy. How, When we look at things through the lens of a black person, a black woman, all decisions are better. Because if we look after the people that are getting the least, the people that are getting the most will get what they need as well.

WENDI 00:19:29

I wanted to know a bit more of your role as a registered nurse. So I'm assuming you were designated an essential worker by the Washington governor's "Stay at Home, Stay Healthy" order. Is this correct?

JANE 00:19:45

Yes, we were but not because just as a registered nurse. Even as unions we were classed as essential workers because the workers needed us at that moment. You know, it's not a time for you to just not be around. Right? And so the governor, And we pushed hard to also make sure that it was very important that unions, especially health care unions, were seen as essential workers, because we're essential in helping our members navigate this pandemic. For all the reasons why, because our members couldn't stay home.

WENDI 00:20:34

And did you ever feel in danger or that your health was threatened on the job as a result of the pandemic?

JANE 00:20:41

I mean, I think a lot of our organizers felt, because if you have to meet with a member, right? You always have— You're gonna have to risk that you are going to get exposed, right? But mostly, I think as the union, what we try to do is we've figured out different ways to make sure that we're there for our members, whether it was through Zoom. Yay, thank goodness for Zoom! whether it was town halls, whether it was sending emails out and in different languages, and directing our members and letting them know, through text messaging to say “this is information you need to know.”

So I think, as a union and the union administrative office itself, we try to minimize the danger as much as possible. There were times when our members really needed to see somebody, talk to somebody, and so we're there. But that was, you know, we really try to minimize the risk as much as possible. But you know—And I know family members that work in the healthcare field that guess their lives were at risk, every single day, not just *their* lives, the lives of their families were put at risk every single day. Because what if you get COVID and you bring it home? Somebody stayed home all the time? What if it's an immunocompromised family? A Lot of our members are immigrants, right? And so they live in big families, you go to work, because you have to work, you got to feed your families, you have to work, right? And then you come home, and you go to your grandma's home— there were no vaccines— and risk that they're going to get sick. Members of color and immigrants were dying at a higher rate. So yes, their lives were put at risk every single day.

WENDI 00:22:39

You also brought up the notion of using technology as a means to keep workers safe. Then there also has been issues of inequities and access to technology. Some people have more access to technology than others. So can you please describe your experience around the issue of inequities in access technology in your role?

JANE 00:23:13

That is what breaks my heart the most! Right? You know, it's knowing that being a woman of color, being an immigrant, having family members that do struggle with technology, that it didn't matter how we really tried as a union, to make sure that our members have what they needed. We knew there were people that we could not reach because of technology equity issues. You know, when you look at your town hall, and you look at the screen, you see more white people on the screen, you see more educated people, white people, well educated people on the screen, and less people of color. You see, the people of color, you know, we're using cell phones, because they don't have a computer. You could see that on Zoom. All those things were things that we knew that you know all you see the kids in the background, trying to tell them what we're doing. Didn't do translation very well, right. You know, so everything was done in English mostly, right? That was not— Although we were shouting out there and saying, “Hey! We need to do this!”

We could have done better, right? You know, just like everybody else could have done better. But we did the most for what we had, and that's why we have to continue to work on equity. And we have to continue to look at things through that lens, so that we don't lose those members who need us the most, because I would say they needed us the most because they were the ones walking around in a fog because they didn't know what was going on because there was nowhere to get that information. And when you think about vaccinations, the first people that go vaccinated, we're older people. Right? I understand that. But they're all older white people mostly, right? Although we tried really hard on the equity pieces, we still have so much more to go, we still need to continue to work on Black Lives Matter, we still need to work on equity, we still need to work on making sure that if English is not your first language, that you still deserve to have the same resources to get what you need for you to be safe in this country.

WENDI 00:25:47

So it definitely seems as if your work has changed a lot, and you have to address a lot of more issues, including equity related issues when the pandemic occurred. So can you walk me through a typical day in your life during the pandemic, from the time you wake up to the time you go to sleep?

JANE 00:26:07

I woke up earlier, I went to sleep later. That is pretty much what it is. I spent a lot of time instead of time working with organizers. But I would say I also spent a lot of time as the Executive Vice President, working with other entities where they're working with other unions work to make sure there's consistency between the unions, which is also one thing that

the pandemic has really done is where unions are beginning to realize that they have to work together for them to win for working families, that you have to work together to win for workers, right? You have to work together to win on immigration, you have to work together to win on health care. And so that's one of the things that unions have really done. And I think I spent a lot of time working with other unions, I spent a lot of time working with the governor, I was on the governor's safe start and task force. Last year, I was on the [Biden-Harris Transition Team COVID-19 Advisory Board]. So I spent a lot of time working with other entities to really make sure that the voices of the healthcare worker were at the forefront when decisions were made. I was in those rooms really fighting for those people, fighting for PPE, fighting for vaccinations, and all that. So I worked more, I think I worked twice as much as I did before. Which is nothing compared to what our workers, the members are going through the health care workers every day, slowly started to happen.

WENDI 00:27:54

I'm really curious about the kind of partnerships your Union made with other unions. So can you tell me a bit more about that, and were there I guess any obstacles or challenges to, you know, building solidarity between these different entities?

JANE 00:28:13

You know, unions have been under attack for so long. Whether it's the *Janus* decision, or even within industries, you have the same unions, and what the *Janus* decision did is really make people start thinking about "how do we build more, how do we get bigger, so that more workers can have voices?"

But that also brought competition, right. And so it's like, which union is better and which is not? And we just have to learn to understand that we are all working for the same thing, that we need to make sure that we are on the same page, because organizations, governments, and people will use that competition to divide us. We needed to be on the same page. We don't always have to agree on everything, but we agree on the same values, values that workers deserve to have what they need for them to do the best job. Workers deserve to have good benefits. Workers deserve to be safe. And if we believe in that, then we've got to work together and have one voice in working for those things so we're able to do that. I think we want better standards, because we're able to do that for everyone.

WENDI 00:29:28

In general, what do you think are the major impacts that the pandemic has brought on the labor movement?

JANE 00:29:49

The biggest impact, I think, is solidarity. I think it's brought a lot of solidarity to the labor movement. I think every labor union now understands that to have economic justice, environmental justice, immigration justice, you have to have racial justice. Without racial justice, all of the other things that we'll be working so hard for as the labor movement, we will not win as well. It has to be rooted in racial justice, for us to win on all the values and all the issues that we want as a labor movement. And I think there is a need, and there's an understanding that we need to figure that out, we need to figure out where black brown and white people can sit in the room as workers and see how they fit in. I think what this pandemic has shown us is that we want to be stronger unions, and want to build a bigger and better labor movement, that it has to be centered on racial justice. To me, I think that's the biggest thing that we have discovered as the labor movement.

WENDI 00:32:13

What has been the most challenging part or parts of life during the pandemic for you personally?

JANE 00:32:27

I'm a people person. I like talking to people, I like meeting people, and I am scared of the virus. I'm scared. I don't want it. Nobody wants to die, so that's been the most difficult part. And I think also trying to convince people that there is a way out of this pandemic, they have to do things differently, and people don't want to change.

WENDI 00:33:07

And related to that, the pandemic has really changed a lot of people's social lives. So I was wondering, how has the pandemic changed your social life? For instance, have there been a lot of previously in person events moved online? Or how has your social life changed?

JANE 00:33:30

For work, especially, we don't have any in person meetings. Hopefully we'll start doing that this year, so we haven't had any in person meetings. Personally, I used to have a huge Thanksgiving, family dinner every year, we don't have that anymore. One good thing about the pandemic that is different is we relied a lot on it, we were not efficient with time. You will travel for an hour for a meeting for now and then travel and now back home you have three hours of your time. Right? And now you can do a zoom meeting. Maybe you're not getting the full interaction, but pretty close if you know, especially people, in an hour, and you still have two more hours to do other things. Of course, that means that we do more work that we weren't before, because all of a sudden. I don't have an hour's drive anymore. I have an hour of extra work. That's okay. We're doing more with the same amount of time. So those are the things that I think have been different for me. I don't know, I used to fly a lot to a lot of meetings. That's not happening a lot. A lot of family vacations are not happening. Life has changed a lot but it's made us appreciate the people that we are close to, if more.

WENDI 00:35:03

Following up on that, have any family, friends, neighbors, or even strangers helped you in any way as a result of the pandemic.

JANE 00:35:11

I think it was the other way around. I've helped a lot of people, my kids and who I grant babies to, looking after kids, mainly it's people who have helped me or more people that have given me a lot of knowledge to pass on to other people. And that's been really amazing. Though I knew a lot about health care. But when it came to the science of how this virus works, it's been really essential in giving me direction on how to lead our union, in different ways.

WENDI 00:36:04

And you also mentioned, like your kids, if it's relevant, how has childcare and school changed?

JANE 00:36:16

A lot. For a long time, it was closed, so people had to go to work. I became the childcare worker for a little bit because I could stay home. So I think it was very difficult. And we also as a union worked really hard to make sure that the essential workers were prioritized, which are care, that the places that were open, we're open to children to essential workers, so that they can go to work. I still think that childcare is if we want people to work, we're going to think about a different solution. We'll have childcare. So it was just, it was just very difficult. It was just really difficult to meet the expectations of my daughter being a single parent. And so there was nobody to stay home with the child. So I had to do it. But what if I didn't, if what if I couldn't do it. And she was still expected to be at work. Because she was classed as an essential worker. So what would have happened, and I think about that a lot about those people that are in that situation that had nobody. And not having understanding employers to help them navigate their life so that they can do their work as well. Because I think there were a lot of employers that were very reluctant to work to get people to work from home, even though we all know that good workers who are probably more efficient working from home know that they instead of traveling all over the place. Anyway, it just took a while.

WENDI 00:38:15

Overall, how has the pandemic impacted your sense of personal well being?

JANE 00:38:25

A lot, because I think you're like I just mentioned earlier that I work twice as much as I did before. And I don't know how to turn it off. So gotta learn how to do that. How do we have a real vacation in two years? So it's hard to switch off because I want to know that other people can't get the time to switch off. And I want to be there for people when they need us, because that's what we do as a union. We need to be there to help them navigate their lives to help them understand what their role is and how they can create more power in the workplace. Because of this pandemic, people are realizing



that they do have the power in the workplace. We have to be there at this time to let them understand how they can have that power.

WENDI 00:39:21

And going off of your mention of the workplace. I was wondering what hospital or workplace Do you work in? And can you describe any general impressions you have of your workplace during the pandemic?

JANE 00:39:38

We have 32,000 members. And we work all over West all over Washington. So whether it's in Spokane, or whether it's in the Yakima hospital or the University of Washington, Harborview northwest valley Swedish, multi care. We have a lot of employers, and employers care about patients. But they will always put profits before pay before workers. And this pandemic is not any different. They know in their hearts what's right, but they will still continue to do the wrong thing to make more profits. And that is why people need unions. That's why the labor movement is so important. Because we need to have that counterbalance to push back on the employer when they are putting people's lives at risk. So they can make a buck. And that has not changed. We fought harder, the fight for the PPE was the hardest, because I believe that they knew it was wrong. But they would gaslight the workers and let the workers think that they were wrong. Without unions to push back, like I said, I do believe more healthcare workers would die, and their families.

WENDI 00:41:28

And following up on that, I was wondering whether you or anyone you know lose housing or have the housing situation feel threatened by the pandemic.

JANE 00:41:43

My son who's not, doesn't get paid very much, continues to struggle with housing. I think the hardest part is we have a system in place where if you're not working, maybe you'll get help. If you're a high paying job, you'll find and then you get those people that are right on the cusp of your few dollars over the hill to get help. They're the ones that are falling through the housing gap. They're the ones that can be made homeless, because everything's more expensive, but they've been told that they make too much money. And we all know they don't. So yes, I know a few people that are going through that. And we got to do better about the safety net. Because those people work hard already working dangerous jobs. And they can afford housing. Doesn't seem right. And even with \$15 an hour, even with \$15 an hour, which is not enough. Sorry, could you repeat that?

WENDI 00:43:06

I was just asking. What about food? Like has the pandemic impacted? You or people, you know, ability to access food and especially the foods that they consider, a part of their culture?

JANE 00:43:23

We all know how, because of the pandemic, it was hard to import some food stuff. So yeah, I'm sure people are starving. And I think most normal people don't think about it. The general population, but we know there are people living every day in poverty and hunger, because they don't have good jobs.

WENDI 00:44:01

And do your family or social circle wear masks or practice social distancing? And what ways do you do so?

JANE 00:44:12

So first of all, everyone in my social circle is vaccinated. That's really really important. Every time we're out of the house, we wear masks and social distance. So I think it's a little bit different for me because I worked with the COVID transition team. So I have to set an example. And also have to set an example with the members, you know, as a union, it's about safety and we've got to live. If our members are expected to live that way, then we need to do the same thing we need to, you know, do what they do. So yes, do all those things.

WENDI 00:44:56

Are you ever quarantined?

JANE 00:44:59

I shudder to say the word. No, I have never been quarantined. Because I haven't been close to people that have had COVID.

WENDI 00:45:13

And did you ever get sick or know anyone who did and it doesn't have to be COVID just any illness? And what are your thoughts or feelings about just getting sick in general, while the pandemic is ongoing?

JANE 00:45:25

I had a couple of times where I got most of the flu, because when we got tested, it was negative. Or I thought it was COVID. I was scared. So I was really excited about the vaccine and, and all that. And I know a few people that a few of my family members have died from COVID. And that is traumatic, can't see them in the hospital, see them on a zoom as the beam ventilated, no, maybe you never see them again, which we didn't know about some of them. So it's scary, scary time, scary time. And if I feel that way, imagine what the healthcare workers feeling

WENDI 00:46:18

Was a very scary time for so many people. So I was wondering, did you access any government or community support due to the virus?

JANE 00:46:30

I'm lucky enough to have the resources that I need, because I have because I'm leaving the union. And the union has good benefits and a good wage. So now I do my son actually, girlfriend got laid off. And she used unemployment, the unemployment piece, and we worked hard with our employers to make sure that people that are not working. I think that another little known, people don't really know that unions fought really hard with the state to make sure that people that weren't working were able to get unemployment because of the shutdown. And so I don't think a lot of the public know that unions fought and reminded and got the state to make sure that there is access to things for people when they are not working so that they can go on unemployment. We have a lot of our members also filling in employment forms, when they aren't working, when high risk people do so. And really when you are from the way has been so amazing because of the things that we did as unions to be able to do that, to make sure people have time off. Sick time, paid sick time. So as unions, we've done so much that people don't see the benefit straightaway. And then during this pandemic, all those resources are being used right now.

WENDI 00:48:30

And what has surprised you the most about this period of time?

JANE 00:48:47

I think resistance to science. I'm really surprised that we get vaccinated all the time they get the flu shot, they get all those things, right. And all of a sudden this vaccine hesitancy, not because I can see why people of color have that. Right? And the gap was decreased a little bit because there's a history there, right? That's surprising, but they see other people, right that all the people have privileged that all of a sudden thing. That has surprised me.

WENDI 00:49:42

And would you mind elaborating a bit more on vaccine hesitancy among people of color since there have been a lot of reports about now increasing vaccine hesitancy due to the kind of racist legacies, the medical field. So would you mind telling me a bit more about your thoughts on that?

JANE 00:50:10

I think we use that a lot as an excuse for why people of color are not getting vaccinated, when the majority of the reason that they're not getting vaccinated is because they don't have the resources or the information to get vaccinated. So I want to start off with that. Because I think we use that as an excuse. So we don't get into the communities of color, to give

people information so that they can make up their minds to get vaccinated. That did not happen, especially the first few months of the vaccines. Literally, because of the way the system is built. This racist institution's race as white supremacist system that's been put in place, has made it harder for people of color to access these resources. We cannot ignore that. But yes, there is a history of not trusting white people, that they're not going to use you as a guinea pig. We know that it was done in the past. And there is a hesitancy there. But I also believe that people don't want to die. What was wrong is the fact that there was no system in place to distribute his vaccines, there was no system in place to give people the right information. There was no system in place that said, people of color, when I look on the television and see white person telling me to get a vaccine, I'm not. Maybe I might get it done. But if somebody that looked like me was telling me that I should get the vaccine, and I got it, and I was fine, I'm more likely to get the vaccine. So there were lots of different reasons why that hesitancy, I don't want us to just think it's just history. Yes, it is history, we can ignore that fact, but especially this, we have a system in place that makes it difficult for people of color to actually get those resources.

WENDI 00:52:17

And one of the last questions is, how do you think life will be different after the pandemic, whenever that will occur?

JANE 00:52:33

Nope. I think people forget. I think people will for a little while. See, yeah, that was horrible. Oh, maybe I'll remember to wash my hands today. I might do a little bit of social distancing. As soon as they say masks go away, people are gonna take them off. I think within five years of the pandemic, it's gonna be remembered. I think human nature forgets really quickly. They think they don't want to go through, they don't want to remember those hard times. So it's going to be on us on history books, to tell people the story, the next generation of what it was like, during this horrible pandemic, like we hear about it, and, you know, with the 1900s, with the pandemics that we've had in the past, we we hear that history, but people forget, right, because and I am not sure that there has been enough policy changes that's going to make lasting change in people's lives. And because of the division because of the political division.

WENDI 00:53:58

And would you mind telling me more about this, these political divisions or, partisanship that has occurred in the recent years and how do you think that really influenced How can Americans respond to the pandemic?

JANE 00:54:30

I think there has been a certain type of brainwashing. It's almost that accepting something good from the other side is like betraying your side. And I think this division has caused more deaths than will ever be seen in any other generation. We literally killed ourselves. each other because of the division and and I do think that certain example as the leader of whatever is so important when you have somebody, Donald Trump, that really saw that much division that it, it doesn't matter Biden coming along with them, we are one America, that the division was already there, right? And trust was eroded. And I think it's gonna take a long time. I am worried, really worried that we're not going to be able to reverse this destruction that happened in the last four or five years.

WENDI 00:55:49

And on the other hand, can you reflect on any positive experiences in the pandemic?

JANE 00:55:57

Yes, we became more creative. We can become more creative and talk to each other. Look what we're doing right now, right, we would have had to set up a time to train, whatever, maybe come to enough. So we've learned to be more creative. And I think that that is really, really important. To realize that change is possible, that we don't always have to do the same thing all the time, if it's not given us the right result, this has given us the results, let's continue on that this is actually the permanent change that will happen from the pandemic is the fact that with technology to be able to do much more and reach more people, we need to do a better, we need to do an easier, we need everybody needs to have access to technology, everyone whether is the internet, when the infrastructure bill was passed, I got really excited, because it's like people will understand how important that is now. Because you couldn't get to a meeting and you needed to use your internet. Right? So broadband, every household needs to have a computer. How do we do that? Every child now knows how to use Zoom. How amazing is that? So technology greats, everything else? Jury's out.

WENDI 00:57:34

All right. We're nearing the end of our interview. And I just wanted to ask whether you have any other thoughts you'd like to share, or if there's any things you believe I missed, and you feel it's important to talk about.

JANE 00:57:50

The only thing I want to say is I think this is a huge opportunity for the labor movement right now. I believe that people want unions if they have the opportunity to do so. And the pandemic has really made people see the role of unions and how unions have been important in keeping them safe and increasing wages. Such a huge opportunity. Unions are the only way you cannot rely on the employer to increase wages, you cannot rely on the employer or the government to increase to make you safe as well as they could. Because the unions are working for the interests of working people. And I do know that when working people stand up together, as one, they go up. And we were able to win a lot of things in this pandemic, without employers with a government because we stood together as one. And we need to continue to do that. And that has to be the forefront and not the competition, and transparency is so important. So these are these, it's a great opportunity. And I'm excited to see what the next 10 years are going to have. And how Washington state is actually going to lead the way of having mostly unionized forces, building a better society.

WENDI 00:59:36

All right. And on that note, it was great talking to you today. Thank you so much for really giving your time and energy to this project.

JANE 00:59:50

Well, thank you. Sorry, the internet's really bad. The infrastructure bill is gonna change that. But a great opportunity. I don't think I would have been able to do it if it wasn't for COVID. Technology and I am happy that I was able to talk about our union and how essential it was in keeping our members safe in the pandemic, and thank you for doing this. I can't wait to see the final product.

WENDI 01:00:27

All right. Thank you.